



Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Natural Heritage Program

Panax quinquefolius L.
American Ginseng

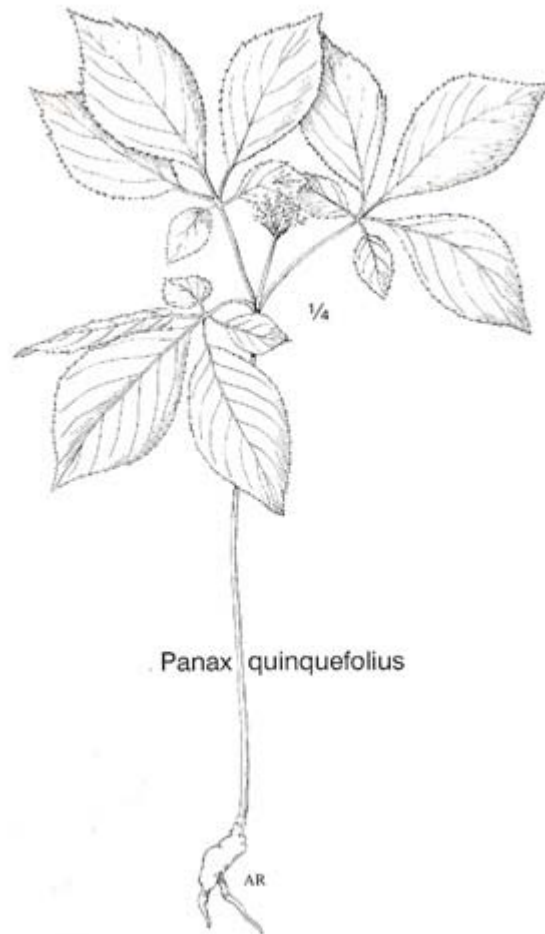


Photo by L. Urbatsch

Identification: Perennial herb. Root fusiform. Stem ranging from 0.5-4 dm (at most 6 dm) in height. Leaves in whorls, palmately compound and 1-5 in number. Leaflets 3-7 (but usually 5), the blades obovate, or those of the basal leaflets oval or suborbicular, acuminate, serrate, base oblique, and up to 15 cm long by 8 cm wide on long petiolules. Peduncle up to 25 cm long but probably shorter. Umbel terminal and simple. Sepals up to 0.2 mm long. Petals greenish-white. Ovary mostly 2 or 3-celled. Style distinct. Fruit 8-10 mm long, and bright red.

Key ID characters:

- Perennial herb with rather large roots, largest in the middle and tapered at the ends.
- Up to 4 dm tall.
- Leaves in whorls, palmately compound (leaflets usually 5 in number), serrate, 15 cm by 8 cm.
- Flowers in simple umbels.
- Petals greenish-white.
- Fruit bright red.



Panax quinquefolius

Illustration by Anne Rogelberg. Reprinted with permission from N.H. Holmgren, *The Illustrated Companion to Gleason and Cronquist's Manual: Illustrations of the Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, p. 343, Copyright 1998, The New York Botanical Garden.

Habitat: Cool places in rich woods.

Taxonomic Comments: This species is a member of the family Araliaceae. There are only two other species within the family known to occur in LA: *Aralia spinosa* (Hercules' Club) and *Hedera helix* (English Ivy).

Status:

Wetland: No Data

Global: G3G4 - Vulnerable - Apparently Secure

State: S1 - Critically Imperiled



Southern Mesophytic Forest

Range: Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Soils: alkaline loessial deposits.

Similar Species: There are no closely related taxa present in LA that could be confused with *Panax quinquefolius*. However, because of the leaf complexity and because it may be quite short in height, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia Creeper) may be mistaken for it. It is however a vine, much more common throughout the state, and a member of the family Vitaceae.

Reason for Rarity: Habitat loss; occurring in Louisiana on fringes of its habitat range; collection by herbalists.

Known Distribution in Louisiana:
West Feliciana

Dates of Natural Heritage Program Observations:
1938, 1986

Best Time for Viewing this Species:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D



Distribution in Louisiana

References :

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